

# Latin American Youth Learn Computer Workplace Skills

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A \$25 million alliance that includes Microsoft, Cisco Systems, and Lucent Technologies will prepare 12,000 young people in as many as 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for entry into the 21st-century work force.

More than half the people in Latin America are under age 24, and youth unemployment is on the rise. Schools fail to teach young people computer skills, though businesses urgently need employees who can work in the region's growing information-based economy.

To connect labor market needs with young people interested in information technology careers, USAID contributed \$3 million and joined with International Youth Foundation (IYF), the Inter-American Development Bank, and

corporate partners to initiate the three-year project known as Entra 21.

Bill Reese, Chief Operating Officer of IYF, said, "USAID's support of this new kind of partnership will ... take best practice programs to scale."

The project provides grants and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations to train youth to work with computers and workplace technologies. Local, youth-serving organizations and the local private sector must demonstrate that the training is based on current and emerging employment opportunities and that the trainees will be linked to jobs via internships and placement mechanisms.

Since December 2002, Entra 21 has awarded grants totaling \$4.4 million in eight countries in Latin America. ★